

30 May 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Walt Rostow

REFERENCE :

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SUBJECT : Latest Bomb Damage Information on Hanoi
Power Plant #81

1. The attached memorandum is still an accurate
assessment of the status of North Vietnam's electric power
industry.

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Director of Current Intelligence

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State Department review completed



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MEMORANDUM

DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

The Situation in Vietnam

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26 May 1967

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Information as of 1600
26 May 1967

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HIGHLIGHTS

Heavy fighting has been reported in several areas near Con Thien in northern I Corps. In the presidential race, Premier Ky has declared his candidacy without any reservations, while Tran Van Huong, the leading civilian contender, has formally announced his candidacy.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Heavy fighting was reported in several areas near Con Thien on 25 May (Paras. 1-5). Recent Intelligence reports continue to reflect the build-up of Communist forces in the western portion of Pleiku Province (Paras. 6-9).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: Premier Ky declared today that he intends to be a candidate whether or not Chief of State Thieu enters the race (Paras. 1-3). Militant Buddhists may participate quietly in the coming presidential elections (Paras. 4-6). The ruling Directorate continues to review aspects of the electoral law, but is taking steps to avoid provoking a hostile reaction in the Constituent Assembly (Para. 7). Tran Van Huong, the leading civilian contender, today formally announced his presidential candidacy (Para. 8).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:
There is nothing of significance to report

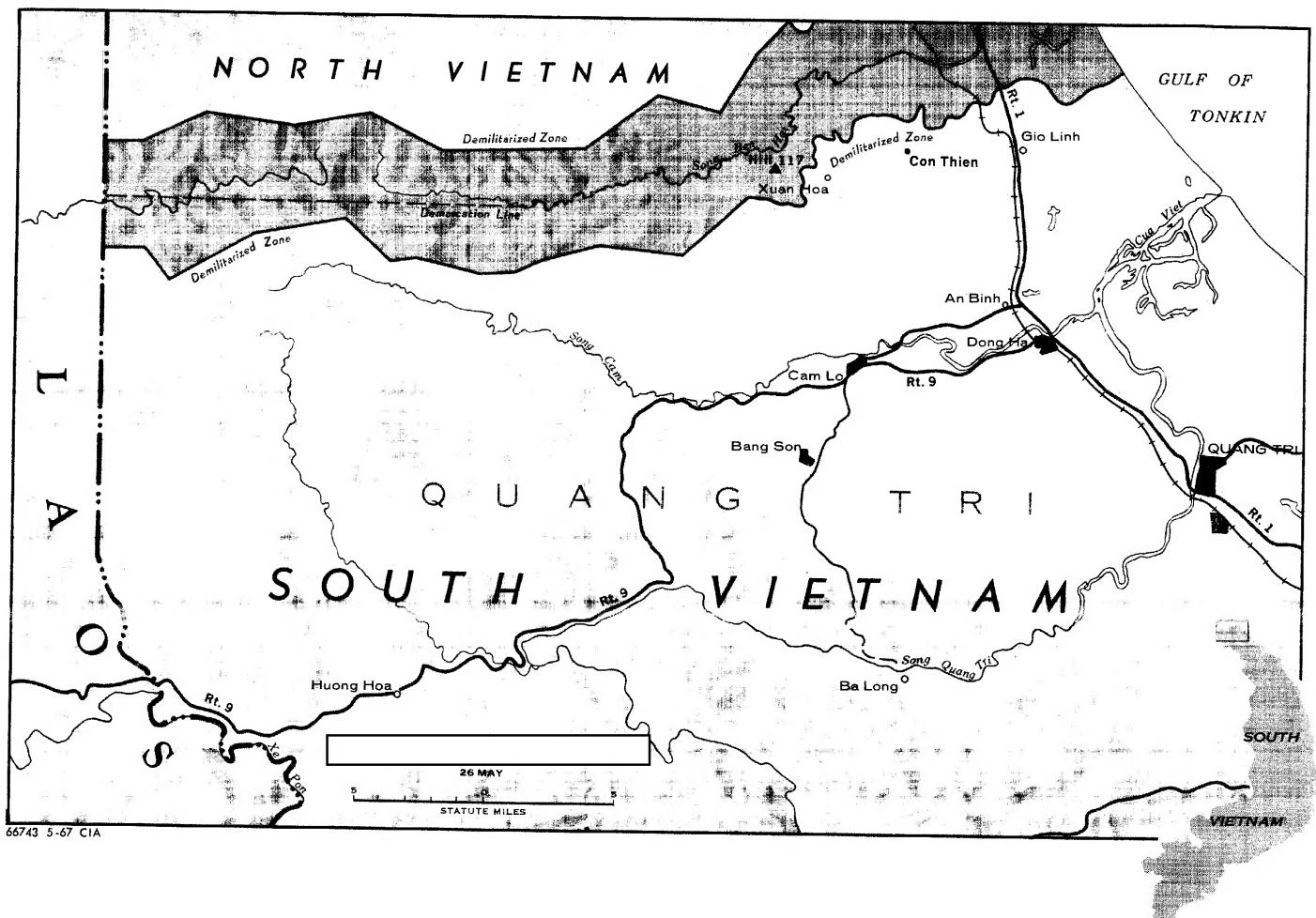
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V. Communist Political Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

VI. Other Major Aspects: Truck traffic on the Laotian road net during the past two weeks has declined but continues at a low level (Paras. 1-4).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. US Marines participating in Operation HICKORY reported renewed sharp fighting in several areas near Con Thien on 25 May.

2. Following a Communist rocket attack on a US Marine field position, elements of a US Marine battalion--later reinforced by another battalion--attacked the position from which the rockets had been fired. The enemy position, known as Hill 117 and situated in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) about three miles west of Con Thien, consisted of heavily fortified bunkers in a densely foliated area and was probably defended by at least a reinforced company. As a result of day-long fighting that was reported to be extremely heavy at times, the Marines were able to overrun the enemy position while suffering 14 killed and another 102 wounded. Preliminary casualty reports also showed 41 North Vietnamese soldiers killed.

3. About four miles northeast of Con Thien, elements of another US Marine battalion engaged a Communist force of undetermined size on 25 May. Initial casualty reports show 17 Communists killed; no American losses have been reported thus far.

4. Following these two engagements, two other allied installations were struck by enemy barrages. The US installation at Con Thien was hit with approximately 16 rounds of 140-mm. rocket fire late on 25 May, resulting in friendly losses of three killed and 12 wounded. A Marine command post seven miles south of the DMZ was also shelled briefly with friendly losses of one killed and five wounded.

5. This harassment of allied troops and positions near the DMZ indicates a continuing Communist intent to maintain pressure against allied forces, possibly until a large-scale offensive can be mounted.

Enemy Buildup in Western Pleiku Province

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Special Forces camp at Duc Co may be the main target of an enemy attack. A document captured in this region on 3 May states that elements of the "B-3 Front" have orders to encircle and attack Duc Co in May and June.

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7. [redacted] located the headquarters of the "B-3 Front," the headquarters of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) 1st Division, and at least three NVA regiments (the 66th, 32nd, and 88th) in the western Pleiku Province - Cambodian border region. [redacted]

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8. After a period of relative quiet, US forces have had four sharp clashes with Communist units in this general area during the past two weeks. The most recent engagement occurred immediately west of Duc Co on 25 May. Elements of the US 4th Infantry Division killed 92 NVA soldiers in the fight while losing ten killed and 54 wounded.

9. Reinterrogation of an NVA sergeant, who was captured in western Pleiku Province on 21 May, discloses that the NVA 32nd Regiment has recently been rearmed with six 120-mm. mortars and antitank mines "to be used on Highway 19." This information suggests that an enemy attack on Duc Co would probably have the character of a heavy artillery action followed by attempted ambushes of allied reinforcements using Highway 19, the major road between Duc Co and Pleiku.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Premier Ky today told newsmen that he intends to remain a candidate for the presidency. Ky's remarks were made in response to questions regarding his earlier hints that he might withdraw if Chief of State Thieu also became a candidate. Although it had been questionable whether Ky would in fact withdraw under such circumstances, he is now on record as a firm candidate without reservations.

2. In pursuing his campaign, Ky has made another bid for the support of the Chinese community, which includes some 500,000 voters. Last week, Ky spoke out in favor of the return to the Chinese community of control over a school, hospital, and other property that had been seized by the government in 1960. A prominent Chinese spokesman subsequently told US Embassy officials he was confident that the technicalities would be resolved in time for the transfer of the property to take place before elections. If the transfer does take place, Ky's prestige could be boosted considerably in the Chinese community.

Militant Buddhists May Participate in Presidential Elections

4. Militant Buddhists under the leadership of Thich Tri Quang may quietly encourage their faithful

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to vote in the coming presidential elections.

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militants plan to organize support for one slate, even though they will not publicly endorse the elections or any specific candidate. A decision on which candidate the militants will support will not be made until after the official filing deadline for presidential candidates in early June. Militant leaders indicated that their current preference was retired General Duong Van Minh. If Minh does not return to Vietnam, however, they will probably support Tran Van Huong.

5. Last year, the militants boycotted the Constituent Assembly elections, but were markedly unsuccessful. Thus, they may well feel that they stand to gain by at least providing unofficial support for a candidate of their choice, even while publicly maintaining their posture of disapproval regarding the election itself. The Buddhists will probably choose the candidate who would be the least likely to cooperate with Premier Ky and his supporters without, at the same time, jeopardizing any particular Buddhist interests. In fact, one militant leader reportedly remarked that if Ky and Thieu are the only two strong candidates in the field, the Buddhists will vote for Thieu.

6. Militant leader Thich Thien Minh reportedly claimed that about 1,200,000 voters throughout the country can be influenced by the militants' organization. There is no accurate way of assessing the validity of this estimate. In general, Buddhist influence at the grass-roots level has varied widely depending upon the issue and the circumstances. The militants, however, do have a relatively disciplined and responsive clerical hierarchy, especially in central Vietnam, and their support of a candidate cannot be entirely discounted as a significant factor.

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Directorate Continues Discussion of Presidential
Electoral Law

7. The ruling Directorate has continued to review aspects of the electoral law since 24 May, according to one of its staff members. Decisions reached on 24 May--to request the Assembly to accept the Directorate's original election dates and to drop the nomination process currently written into the law--still hold, but will be expressed in milder and more compromising language in the Directorate's official letter to the Assembly. The Directorate has also been discussing the advisability of asking the Assembly to include a provision for a runoff election, but has not yet reached a décision. The staff member thinks, however, that a request for a runoff will not be approved by the Directorate. Indications thus far are that the meetings have been proceeding with a general consensus still in effect. Chief of State Thieu and Premier Ky apparently have had no open disagreements on electoral law matters, despite their rivalry over the presidency.

Tran Van Huong Announces His Candidacy

8. According to late press reports, former premier Tran Van Huong officially announced his presidential candidacy on 26 May. Huong told US Embassy officers earlier this week that he had definitely decided to run and would make an announcement this week. Huong also said that he would announce the name of his running mate at the same time, however, and press reports thus far have not mentioned a vice-presidential candidate.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. Communist trucking through Mu Gia Pass has declined somewhat during the past two weeks, while traffic in other sections of the Laotian road net has continued at a low level.

2. Roadwatch reports indicate that between 8 and 22 May only about 11 trucks per day moved south in the Mu Gia Pass area--rain and fog obscured the area and the actual number may have been somewhat higher--as compared with a rate of 35 southbound trucks per day during the first week of May. South of Route 9, roadwatch teams continue to report low levels of traffic--about three to four trucks per day--moving toward South Vietnam.

3. During the same period, truck traffic on Route 110 was reportedly somewhat higher: one team near the Cambodian border reported about 20 east-bound trucks per day over a four-day period. Supplies being moved toward South Vietnam by way of Route 110 are believed to be mainly foodstuffs and medicines.

4. Reports of road repairs from ground and air observers indicate that the Communists intend to keep the main routes into the panhandle and south toward the South Vietnamese border open at least until the arrival of the heavy rains expected in the next few weeks. During the past weeks, ground observers have reported extensive repair work--utilizing explosives and 40- to 50-man work crews--to keep the Mu Gia Pass area open to through traffic. Air observers also reported on 7 May that a 100-meter section of Route 912--one of two roads from North Vietnam into the Laos panhandle--had been corduroyed near its junction with Route 911.

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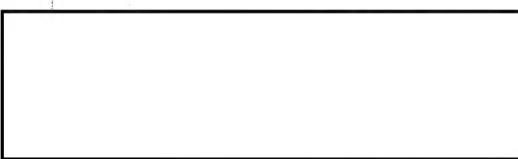
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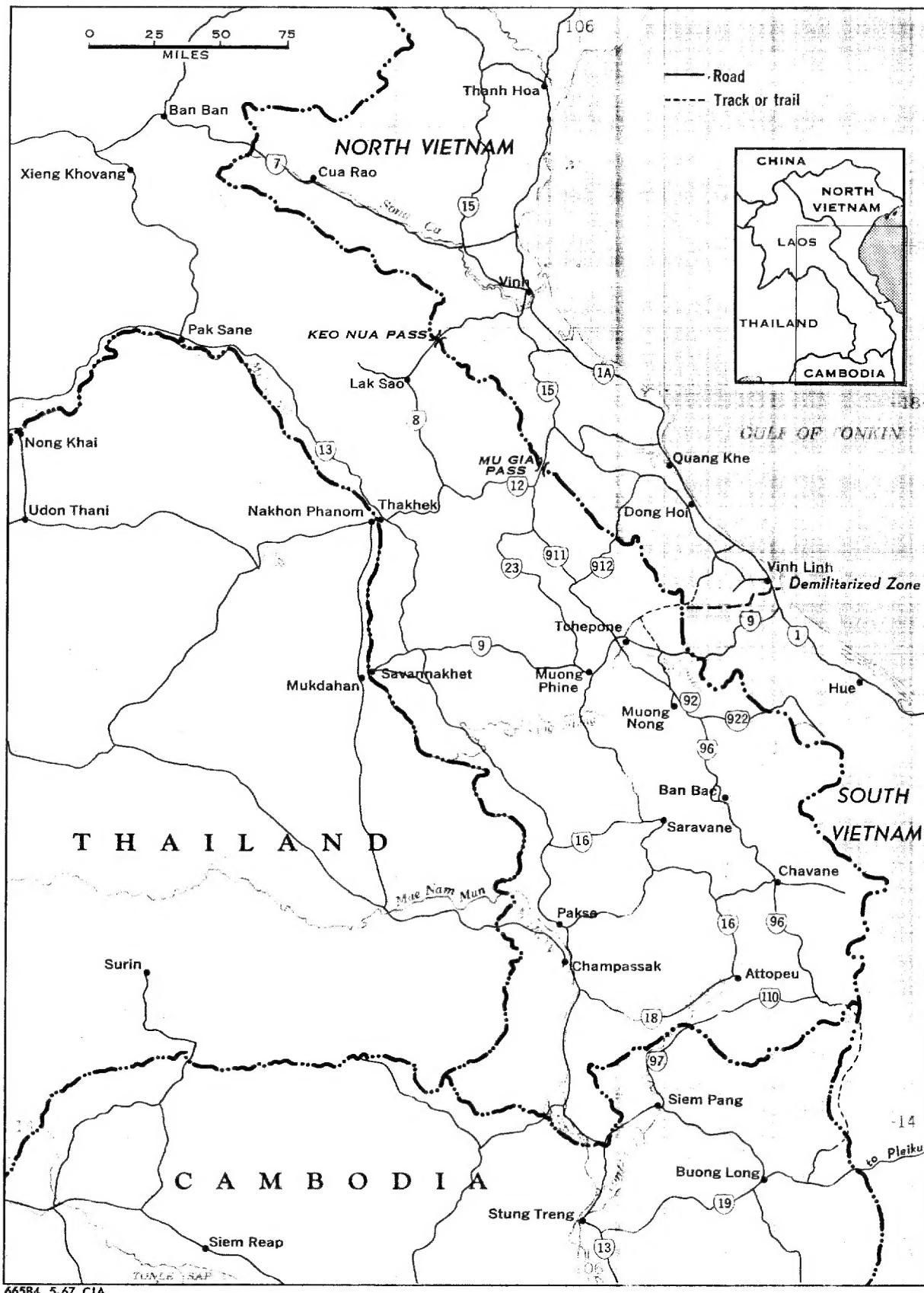
V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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LAOS PANHANDLE



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